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Testimony on HB 6294: AAC Qualifications for Licensed Professional Counselors

Public Health Committee

Submitted by: Stephen Karp, MSW

The National Association of Social Workers, Connecticut Chapter representing over 2800 members is opposed to HB 6294.

We strongly believe that hours of practice performed as an intern should not be equal to practice hours performed as a post-graduate with a clinical mental health degree. Currently, the licensed professional counselor, licensed marital and family therapist and licensed clinical social worker require the eligible hours for the clinical level of license to be post graduate hours under professional supervision. This is done to best assure that the clinical level practitioner, who may practice independently under their license, has met the highest standard of practice experience.

The purpose of an internship is to educate the intern in the practice of their chosen field. Internships are supervised with a standard that takes into account that they are a student learning the profession. The level of responsibility of an intern, the nature of assignments performed and the expectations for a student are all different than for a professional who has attained a graduate level degree. To allow internship hours to be accepted toward licensure eligibility weakens the standard set for licensure. This should not be acceptable to a profession and surely not acceptable in terms of assuring the public that the provider they are working with has met the highest standard of care in becoming licensed.

We also do not see a reason to allow internships to count for work specifically practiced in a state-operated facility. The state of Connecticut, even with recent strides forward in relation to social work, has a long way to go in terms of professionalization of social service staff. We fail to see how an internship in a state-operated facility is somehow a superior setting for internship that rates special treatment as provided by HB 6294.

NASW/CT limits its comments on other professions licenses as we believe each profession should generally be able to set its own standard for licensure. We do however oppose proposals where we see potential for harm to the consumer. HB 6294 meets that threshold for our commenting by its provisions that weaken the standard currently set for a clinical independent license for mental health providers.

